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DEPT FOR CA/FPP  
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PARIS FOR DHS/ICE  
ECOWAS POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS

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SUBJECT: DAKAR FRAUD SUMMARY - SECOND QUARTER FY2008

REF: A. 07 STATE 171211  
[1](#)B. 07 STATE 2417

[1](#)1. Following is Embassy Dakar's quarterly fraud reporting cable for the second quarter of FY 2008. Responses are keyed to Ref A.

[1](#)2. A. COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Senegal is a secular republic with a strong presidency, weak legislature, a compliant judiciary, and multiple weak political parties. The country is predominantly rural with limited natural resources. Between 60 and 70 percent of the Senegalese workforce relies on agriculture, either directly or indirectly, to earn a living. In 2007, Senegal recorded an estimated five percent growth rate, but its economy is highly vulnerable to variations in rainfall and fluctuations in world commodity prices. As a result, increasing numbers of young Senegalese are moving to the cities to seek employment. With a 45 percent unemployment rate (and a very high underemployment rate), many Senegalese seek work opportunities in the U.S. and Europe. In 2007, over 30,000 Africans - including many Senegalese - attempted to migrate to Europe via clandestine fishing boats bound for Spain's Canary Islands.

Reports during the previous quarter indicate possibly serious food shortages in rural Senegal. While food supplies remain normal in Dakar and other big cities, increasing prices for imported food and basic commodities are having a negative impact on the disposable income of the urban working class and poor. For Senegal, which is heavily dependent on imports, high and increasing international prices for cereals such as rice and wheat will exacerbate problems of access to affordable food. On March 30, two Senegalese consumer associations organized a demonstration against this steady rise of costs, a demonstration that was forcefully broken up by riot police. On April 26, more than 1,000 people also marched through central Dakar to protest rising food costs. President Wade has announced new programs to address concerns about food supplies and prices and has claimed that there will not be famine in Senegal. International organizations continue to closely monitor the situation.

In 2007, formal sector remittances from Senegalese living and working overseas were estimated at almost USD 1 billion, and the flow of money to Senegal through informal channels is estimated to equal or surpass that amount. A single Senegalese worker in Europe or the U.S. can provide significant disposable income for an extended family, or even a small village. Consequently, many young adults are encouraged to emigrate illegally by heads of household or community leaders.

There is growing concern that high volumes of illegal narcotics are transiting through West Africa, perhaps including Senegal. This dynamic also raises concerns about increasing levels and sophistication of corruption, money laundering, and other financial crimes which could exacerbate consular-related fraud in the region.

Dakar is a high fraud post. Senegal serves as a regional airline

hub for West Africa, has daily direct flights to New York, Washington, and Atlanta, and is used by many West Africans to transit to the U.S. Airport and airline officials frequently intercept travelers with legitimate documents, but whose identities they question.

It is easy in Senegal to obtain fraudulent civil documents, such as false birth and marriage certificates. Senegalese are also able to easily obtain genuine documents, including Senegalese passports, using false identities. Imposters with authentic travel documents are a recurring problem.

In general, Senegalese place a high value on extended kinship networks. It is common for families to take in their nieces and nephews and to treat these children as their own. Affluent family members are expected to share their wealth, influence, and opportunities with all those who ask. Many Senegalese, including wealthy ones, view travel to the U.S. as an opportunity to earn money to send home and/or obtain free medical care. The obligation to family and friends trumps all other obligations in the Senegalese value system. Many Senegalese see nothing wrong with submitting a fraudulent visa application or with assisting a family member or friend with a fraudulent application.

**B. NONIMMIGRANT (NIV) FRAUD:** The most common type of NIV fraud involves applicants submitting fraudulent documents as part of their B1/B2 visa applications. These documents include false bank statements, invitation letters, employment letters, hotel reservations, and passport stamps. The quality of the fraudulent documents is generally poor and, therefore, relatively easy to detect. Consular officers routinely refuse these cases under INA section 214(b) rather than refer them to the Fraud Prevention Unit

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(FPU).

NIV applicants often obtain genuine, but backdated Senegalese immigration entry and exit stamps in order to cover up previous overstays in the U.S. or to create fraudulent travel histories. As a result, adjudicating officers must carefully scrutinize applicants with previously issued NIVs. We have recently seen fake Chinese and Indian visas as well; however, they were of very poor quality and easy to detect. Applicants often present passports with fake entry and exit stamps from Dubai, Morocco, Senegal, and - increasingly - China.

Post has encountered several genuine Senegalese passports issued with false biodata. Interviewing officers refused all these cases under INA section 214(b), and discovered the identity fraud upon reviewing the subsequent IDENT check. A significant number of these cases involve applicants who were first refused an NIV using a Gambian identity. Ref B describes this trend in detail.

Post also sees a number of unqualified applicants added to legitimate delegations or performance groups.

Senegal has seen few indications of terrorist and criminal activities.

**C. IMMIGRANT VISA (IV) FRAUD:** Post processes IVs and Fiance Visas (K1 Visas) for the following countries: The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Post processes Asylee/Refugee Following-to-Join family members (V92/93) for residents of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Adjudicating officers refer approximately 40 percent of these applications to the FPU. Of the cases referred to the FPU, approximately 50 percent involve fraud.

Relationship fraud is rampant in IV and K1 applications. In all seven countries listed above, applicants can easily obtain genuine civil documents with false information. As a result, DNA testing is often the only means to confirm a biological relationship. In addition, the FPU conducts extensive interviews, CCD and LexisNexis checks, document verifications, and field investigations. The FPU often relies on other posts to conduct field investigations.

Some CR1 and K1 applicants attempt to hide previous marriages to someone other than the petitioner, either by representing themselves as single or by producing false divorce certificates. Fraud by applicants claiming to be single can sometimes be detected when a spouse is indicated in a previous NIV application. Those with false divorce documents often fail to terminate a marriage with an African spouse before petitioning for entry based on a relationship with an American spouse or fiancé. This is particularly problematic in this region, where polygamous marriages are common.

An added wrinkle to this trend is the difficulty of determining the validity of a previous marriage - and thus whether the current marriage constitutes bigamy - when the only evidence for that marriage is the beneficiary's prior NIV application form. Our applicants often assert that the "NIV marriage" was invented in order to improve their "ties" at the time, but that they were not, in fact, previously married. This leaves us in the difficult position of looking for proof of the legal termination of a marriage which the beneficiary claims never occurred.

Post rarely sees fraud by applicants for employment-based IVs.

Many IV and K1 applicants attempt to hide previous overstays in the U.S. by obtaining genuine, but backdated entry and exit stamps from Senegalese immigration officials. It is very easy to obtain genuine backdated entry and exit stamps, with some Senegalese immigration officials providing them free of charge as a favor to friends and family. As a result, adjudicating officers cannot rely on Senegalese entry and exit stamps as evidence of travel to and from the U.S.

In the second quarter of FY2008, Post returned 88 petitions to USCIS for review with the recommendation that they be revoked. In the first quarter of FY2008, 40 petitions were returned.

1D. DV FRAUD: DV applicants frequently present forged high school degrees or falsified work records to qualify for DV status. Because the issuance of Baccalaureates (the Senegalese high school equivalent) is strictly controlled, the majority of forged and counterfeit documents are easily detected.

Other DV applicants claim to be newly married after being notified that they were selected to continue the DV process. In three cases this quarter from Guinea, the DV winner married within two weeks of

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notification. In two of these cases, the applicants married a pair of sisters that had previously been refused NIVs.

Post has been unable to verify the authenticity of Gambian documents because the Gambian government charges a fee to verify documents. As a result, it has been difficult to verify educational credentials submitted by Gambian DV winners. DV applications from Guinea also pose special problems; all requests for baccalaureate verifications that have been sent to Guinea have been positively verified. In addition, some Guinean DV applicants present an attestation of examination results rather than the actual baccalaureate diploma itself. As a result, Post takes greater care to interview these applicants thoroughly to confirm that their level of knowledge is consistent with their claimed education. Recently, Post has also been able to verify recent baccalaureates online, although this service is limited to only those receiving their degrees during the past school year. Guinea appears to be making progress in controlling and making transparent true recipients of the baccalaureate.

In the first half of FY2008, post issued 21 DVIs and their families, and refused 25 cases. 12 of these were refused under INA Section 212(a)(5)(A) during the initial interview, and 9 were referred to the FPU for further investigation.

1E. ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD: The most common form of passport fraud encountered is the attempt to document imposter Senegalese children as American citizens. During the first two quarters of FY2008, no applications for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) were refused due to a false claim of a biological relationship by an

American citizen. However, DNA testing was recommended and has not yet been performed in 5 cases (13 percent of CRBA applications in the first half of FY2008). This is roughly the same percentage as was seen in FY2007.

In FY08 Post denied a passport application as the child applicant was born to a diplomat dependent who was listed on the Blue List.

1F. ADOPTION FRAUD: While post processes IVs for adopted orphans from seven West Africa countries, most of our adoption cases originate in Sierra Leone. Adoption fraud is rampant in Sierra Leone. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs determines whether a child is adoptable and provides a written recommendation to the High Court of Sierra Leone. The Ministry appears to have no guidelines for making these determinations and has done little to force orphanages to adopt transparent procedures for selecting children who should be eligible to be adopted abroad. Although Sierra Leonean law requires the Ministry to investigate the whereabouts of biological parents alleged to have disappeared, the Ministry appears not to do so.

Sierra Leone birth and identity documents are extremely unreliable. As a result, Freetown's local fraud investigator has to interview individuals in villages to confirm factual information.

Since April 2005, the Mission has requested that the U.S. Embassy in Freetown conduct field investigations when an orphan adoption case has one or more fraud indicators. In the majority of these cases, the investigation has revealed that the children were not orphans. In several cases, birth parents were not aware their children were being adopted, or they believed their children were going to the U.S. for education and would return at age 18.

1G. USE OF DNA TESTING: Post uses DNA testing most frequently in IR2, family preference IVs, V92s, and CRBA cases. Legitimate documents based on fraudulent information are easily obtained, and therefore we cannot rely heavily on local birth certificates. Panel physicians in Dakar collect DNA samples locally, and the results are sent directly to us.

1H. ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFITS FRAUD: Most of post's V92/93 cases involve applicants from Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Relationship fraud is rampant, and DNA is often requested to confirm the relationship.

Embassy Dakar sees a steady stream of applicants who claim to have lost their I-551s (Green Cards). In many of these cases, the FPU has established that the applicants had abandoned their legal permanent residence status by remaining outside of the U.S. for more than one year.

When airport security suspects a passenger of document-related fraud, they will deny boarding and report the incident to the consular section. These passengers then appear at Post to request that the Embassy authenticate their refugee travel documents or green cards. In one such case this quarter, a woman who had been

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denied boarding claimed to have lost her green card and presented a questionable I-551 stamp in an alleged Spanish passport. After further research, the woman admitted that the stamp and passport were counterfeit, then produced a Cuban passport and requested asylum. She eventually accepted a referral to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

1I. ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME, TERRORIST TRAVEL:

Post has seen little hard evidence of alien smuggling or trafficking among visa applicants. While there are terrorist groups and organized crime in the region, this does not appear to effect our consular operations.

1J. HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS, AND CIVIL REGISTRY: At the end of December 2007, the Senegalese authorities began issuing regular passports containing an electronic chip. The consular section has not yet received an official exemplar, but has

seen the passports regularly this quarter. Senegal issues four types of passports: regular, diplomatic and official (passeport de service), and a special passport that is used exclusively for the Hajj (passeport pour le pelerinage). There are at least two iterations of each passport that are currently valid and in circulation. Regular, diplomatic, and official passports all contain 32 pages and an image of the Senegalese seal that is only visible under ultraviolet light. All passports have separate book numbers and passport numbers. A basic description of each passport follows:

**Regular passports:** From 2002 to 2007, Senegal issued biometric passports. These passports have a dark green cover and light green pages with depictions of African animals and a baobab tree watermark, and are usually valid for four years. The biodata page is on page 2. The cover has a gold seal of Senegal that includes a lion and a baobab tree. The passport should contain a stamp on page 3 showing that the fee had been paid, and this should be stamped and signed by a police official. The new electronic passports are maroon and feature the same seal on the front. The biodata page is on the inside of the front cover and is covered with a hologram that says "Republique du Senegal" on the top and includes a series of baobab trees, a turtle, and the Senegalese seal. The interior pages are blue at the top and bottom and fade to a pink color in the middle, include a number of small baobab trees and a watermark on each page that is consistent with the front cover. Post will send an exemplar to CA/FPP as soon as one is available. Prior to the green biometric passport, Senegal issued a blue non-biometric passport with gold lettering on the cover. This passport allowed for handwritten extensions to be entered on its fifth page. Although at the beginning of 2007 some Senegalese missions abroad were still extending these passports, the Senegalese government has ended this practice. Beginning this quarter, we should no longer see any valid blue non-biometric passports.

**Diplomatic passports:** From 1997 to 2002, Senegal issued dark blue diplomatic passports with a round seal on the front depicting a baobab tree. The pages were cream colored with red and brown threads that formed a sunburst pattern around a lion watermark. These passports were handwritten and valid for one year, with the possibility of multiple annual renewals. The bearer's photo was glued on page 5 and covered with a thin laminate that was dry sealed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similar to the handwritten Senegalese regular passports that are no longer valid, because diplomatic passports must be renewed yearly, these non-biometric diplomatic passports should no longer be in circulation. Around 2002, the government also started issuing biometric diplomatic passports that are blue. These newer, biometric passports are still currently in use. Diplomatic passports are often issued to non-diplomats, such as prominent business owners and their families and religious leaders. For example, a recent news story alleged that a number of Senegalese religious leaders received diplomatic passports in advance of the March 2007 Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit that took place in Senegal. Post carefully interviews B1/B2 applicants holding diplomatic passports to determine visa eligibility.

**Official passports:** From 1997 to 2002, Senegal issued brown official passports with a round seal on the front with a baobab tree. The pages were cream colored with brown threads forming a sunburst pattern around a lion watermark. These passports were handwritten and valid for one year, with the possibility of multiple annual renewals. The bearer's photo was glued on page 5 and covered with a thin laminate that was dry sealed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similar to the handwritten Senegalese regular passports that are no longer valid, because official passports must be renewed yearly, these non-biometric official passports should no longer be in circulation. Around 2002, the government also started issuing

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biometric official passports that have a reddish brown cover. These newer, biometric passports are still currently in use.

**Hajj passports:** These one-year, reddish passports are rarely forged by Senegalese and are used exclusively for travel to Mecca. As such, they are very short (fewer than 10 pages). The passport includes a

photo that is glued on and covered with laminate.

Genuine documents with false information, including marriage, death, and birth certificates, and passports are all easily obtained. Fake documents are easily obtained as well, but are usually of poor quality and can be identified due to inconsistent paper quality, inconsistencies apparent in the document's information, and the "official" stamp. Post has seen several cases of applicants with valid passports that are either based on false biodata (i.e. based on a fake birth certificate) or inconsistent biodata (i.e. benign variations in name and/or date of birth). In 2006, Senegal began to produce national identity cards that include an electronically scanned photo. All Senegalese were compelled to apply for the new cards, and anyone claiming to be Senegalese should be able to produce this card if he or she has been in Senegal since 2006.

¶K. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: The host government cooperates well in fraud matters and requests for document verifications. However, because of the high incidence of fraud, post always submits "blind" verification requests, providing authorities with only a minimum of data on the document and requesting that the authorities provide the rest. Senegalese authorities do not always have the ability to verify documents due to the incompleteness of records.

Not all forms of visa fraud are regarded as serious offenses in Senegal, and even government officials are at times willing to use their positions to help friends and relatives obtain visas. While the GOS does prosecute serious perpetrators, particularly foreign scam artists, it will often drop criminal charges if the perpetrator pays restitution to his/her victims.

¶L. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: K-1, CR-1, and IR-1 visa fraud are very common in Senegal. Almost 80 percent of K1 applicants are referred to the FPU for investigation, and approximately 30 percent are returned to the Department of Homeland Security with a recommendation for revocation. Advance fee fraud and dating scams are common in Senegal and post regularly receives emails or calls from Amcits who have fallen victims of the scam.

¶M. STAFFING AND TRAINING:

1) Yvane K. Clark, Consular Associate, full-time Fraud Unit Coordinator. She attended the following training courses in 2007: the All-Africa Fraud Prevention Conference (Ghana), Fraud Prevention for Consular Managers (FSI), and an FBI-sponsored Interviewing Techniques Workshop (Cape Verde).

2) Moussa Sy, Locally Engaged Staff, part-time Local Fraud Investigator. FSN Fraud Prevention Course (PC-542, FSI, Nov. 2007)

3) James Loveland, Consular Section Chief, part-time Fraud Prevention Manager (FPM). No formal fraud prevention training.

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